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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Higher School Certificate Exams

12 October 2017

I contribute to the debate on this matter of public importance, the Higher School Certificate.

The HSC begins next week and the term usually associated with exams is "good luck". My contribution will be about what I hope for every one of the students entering this stressful time.

It is an exciting time, and I hope they have clear thinking, good health and a calm approach so they can call upon their efforts and energy from their 13 years of schooling. Years 11 and 12 are highly stressful, especially during examination times.

The examinations are supposedly a test of skills, knowledge and subject content, but there is another test inherent in the HSC: that of the ability of students to cope with stress, pressure and anxiety.

I wish to acknowledge the students, some of whom I know personally, who have been struggling in the last year and who feel besieged with anxiety. As has already been mentioned, in the next week of study I hope students make good use of their time to exercise, sleep, eat well and relax. These things are more significant to the students' wellbeing than extra study hours.

There are far more important issues that students will face than the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank, though it is hard for them to see that right now. As I said to my eldest son two years ago, and as I will say to my second son next week, the HSC does not determine the rest of your life.

I wish all students well over the next month. Getting through the HSC and high school itself is a fantastic achievement. That needs to be acknowledged.

Afterwards I hope everyone celebrates. It is great to mark this milestone.

I thank all the families, parents, siblings and carers who have been looking after and offering support to the students.

I thank all the HSC teachers, whose guidance, dedication, extra hours, meals and encouragement must also be noted.

To all the students across New South Wales and particularly to those throughout the Blue Mountains, I say: Go well.

To my own son and his cohort from Winmalee High, I say: Give it your best, guys.